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during the pandemic in Chile

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Abstract

This paper explores how media and public discourse around youth and COVID-19 intersect with the attitude and well-being of young people. The qualitative methodology used for this study consisted in an online workshop that involved 4 focus groups and a socio-demographic survey with 13 teenagers between 13 and 17 years old from different areas and contexts in Chile, including their daily routines and experiences during the pandemic. Results show that youth reported being affected by media and public discourses in their daily lives during the sanitary crisis, and perceived to be stigmatized, instrumentalized and invisibilized in terms of their agency, abilities and ethics of care to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic

Keywords: Youth well-being, COVID-19, public discourses

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted society in an unprecedented and profound manner, changing everyday life in various multidimensional and intersecting ways (Palma et al., 2020). The virus has rapidly crossed national borders, affected countries across all latitudes, and has become a complex global crisis. However, this biological, cultural and socio-political crisis has not affected all social groups in the same way or with the same severity.

Chile declared its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020, and the virus has since spread rapidly across all regions of the country, forcing the government to implement strict country-wide lockdowns. Since then, in Chile, lower-income individuals and communities, youth, women, and sexual minorities have been identified as the most affected groups (ILGALAC, 2020; OIT, 2020; Palma et al., 2020). Although at the beginning of the pandemic public discourse and risk communication efforts were mostly centered at macro levels – society and communities – the subjective aspects of the crisis

became increasingly a concern (INJUV, 2020; Palma et al., 2020). These processes of individualization also changed the methods for dealing with collective problems – where the experiences and practices of making sense of and giving meaning to the crisis – as well as one's own state of well-being and transformations in daily life – helped to visibilize structural inequalities and forms of discrimination (Bringel & Pleyers, 2020; ILGALAC, 2020; Núcleo Milenio en Desarrollo Social et al., 2020) that persist in the country.

According to the National Youth Institute survey (INJUV, 2020), more than a quarter of the participants (aged 15 to 29 years) said they felt stressed during the pandemic; 40% recognized having little desire to do things; and 50% had sleeping problems. In addition to these findings the most common emotion among respondents was distress.

By building on different studies, it has been found that as age decreases, the level of stress and other emotional discomforts increase. There is a worse perception of youth's general health, greater perception of conflicts within their homes, a more negative experience of online education and a worse evaluation of the government's health management (INJUV, 2020). However, the state of mind of youth under 18 is less explored than the minds of youth at the university level and/or in their first years of work. This is a group affected by school closures due to the lockdowns, and the transition from face-to-face to online classes (IISUE, 2020;

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Saberes Docentes, 2021). The Education Quality Agency published the Comprehensive Learning Diagnosis of 2020, where more than 55% of middle school students declared feeling 'bored', more than 40% affirmed feeling 'bad tempered or angry', and over 54% declared themselves 'less eager to do things' (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación, 2021).

Although the variables that affect the well-being and attitudes of young people are multidimensional, the media, including digital platforms and opinion leaders, play a very important role, not only in relation to their mental health, but also in relation to their attitudes and behavior in the face of the pandemic. The media, traditional and social platforms, and messaging systems are central vehicles for effective risk communication, both to disseminate relevant and quality information, and to provide emotional support and encouragement (Labrín et al., 2021). However, elements such as misinformation, sensationalism, lack of transparency and accredited sources, mistrust in authorities and media, and others, can generate adverse effects on crisis management, and consequently on the well-being of children and youth (Unicef, 2021).

Currently, in Chile there is a very low level of trust for traditional media and government institutions. Although the media crisis is a global phenomenon, Chile¹ is facing a particularly adverse situation, reinforced during the social outbreak of 2019 (CEP, 2019; Labrín et al., 2021). Trust in radio contents – the communication media with the highest support among all media in the country – dropped from 50% in 2008 to 29% at the end of 2019 (CEP, 2019). The same applies to institutions, where trust in government dropped from 32% in 2002 to 5% in December 2019 (CEP, 2019).

Exploring these trends, in 2019 the UNICEF Chile Office evaluated the media representation of children and adolescents in the country. The report warned that the main topics addressed by mainstream television newscasts regarding childhood and adolescence were violent acts where (1) they appear as the victims or (2) the victimizers (agents of crime). According to this report, youth was mainly represented in connection with the topics of health, education, immigration and accidents. This figure rises within the written press with 29.5% of news outlets having referred to violent situations when addressing children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2019).

The present paper pretends to broaden the discussion by focusing on a group that has been underrepresented in the studies of well-being in Chile and its relationship with media representation: the adolescents. It focuses on the intersection of a particular systemic phenomenon, involving the intertwining of media, in-

stitutions and public opinion leaders, and the subjective experiences of young people – their representations, feelings, and attitudes. In order to explore and to comprehend the intersection of youth, public media discourse, and the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile, this paper – based on the results of the project „Media public discourses and youth in Chile. Representation, well-being, and social attitudes in the context of pandemic” – uses a theoretical framework from communication and cultural studies. Built on the conceptual background of representations, attitudes, and well-being, it pursues the following general question: How does public discourse on youth and COVID-19 – especially in the media and public institutions – intersect with their social representation, attitudes, and well-being?

Conceptual framework

Below, we present a brief conceptual framework, based on the concepts of youth, well-being, representation, and attitude, that serves to better understand the object of study.

Different views on the notion of youth

People use a variety of different terms to refer to youth, such as: youth, young people, adolescents, children, minors, or teenagers. The Germanic origin of the term youth – from the word „jugend” – is related to the word „jeugd” (Gokula & Sethuramalingam, 2017), which means the state of being in the beginning of life. However, the notion of youth is theoretically and empirically diverse, presenting considerable differences in psycho-sociological frameworks (Furlong, 2013; Sandoval, 2007). Several organizations and countries have their own definitions of youth, and over the years the term has been defined by many scholars across diverse disciplines. Even the United Nations has defined youth in various ways over the years, implying that the notion of youth changes with circumstances and contexts, especially considering the constant changes in demographic, financial, economic, and socio-cultural settings (UNDESA, 2013). Some authors explain that youth is a social and legal construct and condition, with specific qualities that manifest in different ways, depending on the contexts and historical period (Villa, 2011).

Reguillo (2010, p. 432-433) observes that in the region of Latin America there are two youths: “one, a majority, precarious, disconnected” and the other, “a minority, connected, incorporated into the security circuits and institutions and in a position to choose”. The same author (2008, p. 10) argues that the notion of youth and youth expression cannot be removed from the socio-political analysis of the society in which they are inscribed, since this “is to assume, on the one hand, a position of exteriority (youth beyond the social) and, on the other, a rather narrow understanding of the political (reduced to its formal dimensions, rather politics).”

Duarte (2000), from a transcultural and sociohistorical perspective, argues that the concept of youth is not a universal phenomenon, and it has generated different social positions marked by the specific experiences

¹ A distinctive feature of the Chilean media scenario, for several decades now, is its acute concentration of ownership of the mass media. This results in a lack of political, economic, social and cultural diversity (Labrín et al., 2021) in the press, television and radio stations., as these are the main sources of information in times of crisis for Chileans.

across cultures. Following Duarte (2009, 2015), the present study approaches the notion of youth by building on recent efforts of historicization, plurality and relational character of young people, where the most significant characteristics correspond to those given by the social, political, economic, and cultural inscription of situated experiences (Canales & Duarte, 2020; Duarte, 2018). The study approaches the notion of youth in the context of Chilean culture and focuses on the experiences of young people during the school stage.

The multidimensional approaches to the concept of well-being

Studying young people's well-being is not a simple undertaking. Well-being can be defined, conceptualized, and measured in different ways. As a concept, it requires careful consideration of a variety of aspects – such as social interactions, play and hobbies, living conditions, education, physical environment, economic and physical safety, or physical and mental health – of youth's lives that can be weighted in different ways. For some, well-being is primarily related to young people's mental states (i.e., mental health) while for others it is much more about whether youth's basic needs or rights are being met (OECD, 2021).

As a multi-dimensional concept, youth well-being is studied from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives, including psychology, medical sciences, economics, and sociology, each including their own methods, approaches, and understandings of the concept (OECD, 2021). Additionally, social and cultural context play a crucial role (UNICEF, 2021).

Across well-being studies, the need to incorporate objective as well as subjective components, including young people's perceptions and actions on well-being, has been highlighted numerous times (OECD, 2021; Rojas, 2011; Sen, Stiglitz & Fitoussi, 2009; UNICEF, 2021). It has gained value and recognition since it considers the „subjective well-being“, which refers to „the way in which individuals perceive and construct their reality, satisfy their needs, make judgments based on this, and emotions derived from such cognitive and affective processes“ (Belrán et al., 2020). Asking youth for their perspectives on different areas of their lives can help ensure that key dimensions of their well-being are properly understood and taken into consideration (OECD, 2021).

Following the above, including youth in the efforts to approach well-being is crucial to be able to better understand what the dimensions are that youth consider more relevant and to design, develop, and implement policies accordingly (Brossi et al. (eds), 2019).

This multi-dimensional vision of well-being also more strongly incorporates variables such as poverty conditions, gender, social and/or economic crises, in addition to variables that have been used to measure the social well-being of countries, such as access to health, education, housing, among others, and that inevitably impact and cross the conditions in which people's well-

being and quality of life are articulated and perceived (Nussbaum & Sen, 2000). This approach to well-being seeks to recognize that „the way in which people experience a series of circumstances is as important as the circumstances themselves and that people are the best judges of how their lives are“ (Castellanos, 2012, 146).

The intersections of representation and attitude

Another critical axis of this study is the concept of representation. According to Stuart Hall (2010), one way to approach the notion of representation is from the circuit of culture schema, in which he considers representational practices as the incorporation of concepts, ideas and emotions into a symbolic form that can be transmitted and interpreted in a meaningful way.

Representation, therefore, is one of the central practices that produce culture. Understanding the latter always as a process, a set of practices that enable the exchange of meanings among the members of a group in society (Hall, 2007). Meanings are what give us a sense of our identity, of who we are and where we belong. Therefore, meanings and practices of representation are intersected to questions of how culture shapes and maintains the identity of subjects and different groups in a society (Hall, 2007).

On the other hand, the concept of social representation, according to Jodelet (1986), designates a form of knowledge, a knowledge of common sense, whose contents manifest the operation of generative and functional processes in which social subjects have apprehended through the events of daily life, the characteristics of the environment, the information circulating in it, the people of the near or distant environment, among others. In other words, social representation would be a form of social thought oriented towards communication, understanding and command of the social, material, and ideal environment (Jodelet, 1986).

Representations, for these scholars, are a form of socially elaborated thought with a practical purpose: to socialize and communicate by generating the particularities of different social groups (Navarro & Restrepo, 2013).

According to Denise Jodelet (1986), social representations have three main functions: the first –from a cognitive sphere– would be to integrate the novelty of the social environment, second, to then interpret reality and third, to guide behaviors and social relations.

Studying the representations around a communication phenomenon, thus, is a way to access not only to communicative exchanges, but also the adequacies and constrictions that are constituted for the interaction with and through the media (Rubira & Puebla, 2018).

On the other hand, representation is a concept closely related to the notion of attitude since the meanings we form in ourselves produce evaluations and feelings that lead to behavior. In this study, attitude will be understood as people's evaluative disposition based on

cognitive, affective and behavioral information that, at the same time, can influence cognitions, affective responses, behavioral intention and the behavior itself (Ubillos et al., 2004). Ajzen (2005) states that these dispositions are directed to respond favorably or unfavorably to a person, object, institution or event, and that although the definitions of attitude have varied, there is a consensus in contemporary social psychology in which the main attribute that characterizes an attitude is the evaluative one, where one can be in favor or not, agree or disagree, think that something is pleasant or unpleasant, among other possibilities.

Therefore, attitudes can be influenced by beliefs, affect and behavior in relation to the object of the attitude. They can be distinguished from feelings in that attitudes involve cognitive evaluation (Matsumoto, 2009).

Youth media representation in the Chilean context

By building on the social movements of recent years in Chile –taking as milestones the student “mochilazo” of 2001 and the Penguin Revolution of 2006–, the media have represented Chilean youth as subjects who navigate the positions of “student” and at the same time “politicized subject” (Araya, Carrasco & Olivares, 2020). The last decade has also been globally and nationally marked by the emergence of a series of movements where youth took a leading role (Cabalin, 2012; Bellei & Cabalin, 2013; Ponce-Lara, 2013; Cabalin, 2014), positioning them beyond the category of “student”. In the particular case of Chile, youth were the protagonists of different social movements, some examples are the Feminist May of 2018 (Follegati, 2018) and the so-called social outbreak of 2019, a protest led by youth against the country’s deep-rooted social inequity.

In Chile, the figure of “the student” participating in social mobilizations breaks the imaginary of youth as a group indifferent to civic and political matters, a frequent media representation of youth in Chile during the ,90s, that questioned the commitment, maturity, and responsibility of young people with society (Duarte, 2018; Araya, Carrasco & Olivares, 2020). From 2019 to 2021, the issue of youth gained greater prominence in the media, on the one hand, by the social outbreak of 2019 (Alé, Duarte and Miranda, 2020) and especially during the first year of the pandemic, where the media have not ceased to represent youth as a homogeneous and irresponsible group that was unable to respect the sanitary norms (Araya, Carrasco & Olivares, 2020, 1).

Given this background, and as interestingly pointed out by Aníñir et al. (2021, p. 206), there are turning points in terms of youth representation in Chile during the last years; one of these is that in the context of the revolt, youth embodied counteracting „front line“, against the repressive agents of the State. This front line was recognized and legitimized by the population, while it was penalized by the State, which, in turn, criminalized young people as agents of protest. With the advent of the pandemic, the denomination „front line“ is co-opted

by the institutions, establishing a semantic shift on it and assigning it to health personnel who were fighting against the virus.

Following the above, in Chile, the societal heroic image of youth coexists with their media representation, which according to Araya, Carrasco & Olivares, (2020), criminalizes youth and portrays them as irresponsible, immature and as a danger to the common good.

2. Methodology

The qualitative technique used for the analysis and production of information of this study consisted in a Thematic Analysis (from now on TA) (Cáceres, 2003), oriented to the object of study.

The corpus of analysis consisted in the transcription of two videos corresponding to the conversation groups carried out during the online workshop „Youth and Public Media Discourses of the Pandemic“ (June 25th, 2021) and a sociodemographic questionnaire which additionally included youth’s daily informative practices. Out of the corpus of analyses, six documents of systematization were produced, including quotes from the main categories of analysis identified in the conversation groups –representation; pandemic; media; individuals, institutions and discourses; welfare; and attitude–.

The conversation workshop was conducted virtually, using the application ZOOM and the „Rooms“ feature to divide the conversations into groups. Each of the rooms had a moderator who led the conversation and an observer who was in charge of taking notes.

Two conversation groups were conducted with thirteen participants in total, with a fairly equal distribution –7 women and 6 men–. The ages of the participants ranged from 11 to 16 years old. All participants are part of the Alta UACH² school accompaniment program, dedicated to the development of high academic abilities. Participants belonged to low- and middle-income communities.

For the coding process, we used the platform Taguete³, an open source text labeling tool for qualitative data analysis.

The methodology consisted in the following consecutive actions:

A. Design and implementation of the online work-

² The aim of the ALTA-UACH Talent School is to provide an effective response to the educational needs of children and young people in the region, to opt for a learning community where they can develop their high intellectual abilities, talent potential, and meet those needs of integral development that the regular education system does not always meet. For more information see: <https://alta-uach.cl/quienes-somos/proyecto/>
³ <https://www.taguette.org/>

shops.

B. Transcription of the conversations.

C. Coding of the conversation groups based on the different topics of the workshop (attitude, representation, well-being, and public discourses).

D. Sub-categorization of the transcribed material (by identifying relevant themes and patterns and organizing emerging codes and subcategories).

E. Quality analysis of all the produced materials.

F. Thematic analysis.

3. Results

Media representation of youth

As discussed above by Araya, Carrasco & Olivares (2020), according to participants of the study, the media, opinion leaders and institutions have represented or referred to youth in a broadly negative and stigmatizing way. It was manifested that the media often blamed young people as one of the main causes of the increase of contagions, without any concrete evidence. Additionally, participants observed there was a notorious social prejudice against youth, with a strong criticism towards the irrationality of certain social assumptions and generalizations. They emphasized the incongruence of some adult discourses and practices – mainly from leaders of opinion – that do not comply with the sanitary norms they actively promote (e.g., by not using proper sanitary masks on TV sets).

Personally, I think that prejudices [against youth] are horrible, because... I don't know... you haven't left your house since April 2020, but it doesn't matter, he is young, it's still all his own fault. So it doesn't make sense to me and I also resent the prejudice. I can't understand people who really blame 10-24 year olds only. It's like just because they are young, they have to do something wrong. It doesn't make sense to me. (Female, 13 years old).

I also think that they (media, government officials and leaders of opinion) blame youth for many things they are not responsible for. (...) They blame us, for example, for going out with friends, but whenever I see teenagers they always wear a mask. It happens to me that I see adults who take off their masks and say: „no, I don't like using a mask, I want to take it off, I want to do such and such and such“. In other words, I see that they blame us and they are careless anyway. (Female, 12 years old).

Attitudes of youth towards the media, opinion leaders and institutions

In relation to the attitude of participants towards the media, opinion leaders and institutions, in their intersection with the various discourses on pandemics and youth, it was observed that in general terms it has changed over time, with a tendency to be negative.

Personally, I remember that before all this, I liked to watch the news because I liked to be informed, to know what was going on day by day, the criminals, the drug trafficking, all that about vacations, but now every time I hear the intro of a news my heart accelerates, and I feel that they are going to announce... an apocalypse... a meteor shower... Now it is pure negativity [...] the news pressures me... I mean, I feel bad when I see the news, because the only things that I hear are negative things. (Female, 15 years old).

Well, I feel that it has changed because at the beginning it was not so much like a deadly virus, but it was like a virus had spread and we had to be careful. Now it's more like it's a deadly virus, and we hear messages like "it has killed so many people", "stay at home" and so on. In the beginning things were not so „heavy“ one could say, they were easier to cope with. (Male, 13 years old).

Although there is awareness of the role that the media should play among participants, they perceive it as not entirely reliable, due to their lack of commitment to the social problems that have emerged as a result of the pandemic, the poor quality of information and, as observed above, the contradictions between the security and protection measures transmitted by opinion leaders and their own public behavior.

So, for example those who inform.... I'm going to take the example of the morning programs...those transparent mouth covers that have space here (pointing her lower part of the face). I don't feel that they want to take care of themselves because...I just feel that they don't want to take care of themselves...I feel that nobody wants to take care of themselves, and they take it lightly...that's what I feel and even more with the people that are on TV...that's it. (Female, 15 years old).

I feel that what worries them is little because they give information, at least things that happen here, they give false information, they give information indicating there are fewer cases than there are for real, just to reassure people, but in reality, it is a lie. On the other hand, people are going to go out and do anything and they are going to be careless and they are not going to comply with things [...] They say many things to certain parts of society that are not to blame for what is happening, in fact, they are not to blame. (Female, 12 years old).

Participants reported that throughout the pandemic, the media, especially television, have changed their information strategy. They perceive that in the beginning, information about the pandemic and preventive measures was provided, but over time, the informative content and the construction of the news became increasingly sensationalist, inducing fear and consequently, a stronger disinterest by young people about pandemic news.

Information on social media is also seen as unreliable, and in some cases, they consider that adults are more susceptible to misinformation than young people themselves. Participants also perceive that information that represents them in a stigmatizing way also circulates on these digital platforms.

I avoid reading news from social networks because of the lack of seriousness. I don't trust them. (Male, 16 years old).

I think that the same, young people [are represented] as they lack responsibility, because always in social networks: young people go out to have a party and they are people like that, minors. I think that „young“ would not be a bad word, if it didn't have its bad thing, you could say. (Female, 11 years old).

Radio is perceived as the more reliable medium by participants, especially compared to television.

Sometimes we trust more what the man on the radio says, than what they say on TV, even if they repeat the same thing, but we trust him more. (Female, 14 years old).

Well, sometimes I trust the radio more because the person who is talking says his opinion about what he just said. For example, one day they were talking about a little card [mobility pass] and the person who was talking about it said that „it was a stupid idea to take that out“. So, sometimes I trust the radio a little more. (Female, 11 years old).

I kind of feel that the media lies and I don't really trust much; but I could say that the radio also seems more reliable to me. I agree with that. (Female, 12 years old).

In the area of formal education institutions, they report a lack of appreciation of their efforts on the part of teachers, which ends up affecting their attitudes towards their studies. They also report a general lack of motivation after the transition to compulsory virtual education.

[The teacher] said: „last year nobody learned anything“. And I remember that with a group of friends I was kind of upset and I said: „you know what, I understand that you as a teacher are upset, because there are kids who maybe did not learn, or kids who maybe do not have the habit of studying or doing their homework and that also affects you, but do not put everyone in the same bag because there are boys and girls and kids who did their homework“. [...] Last year we had about two months of virtual classes. So, there are kids who did things, we learned and not all of us are going out, I mean, I go out at most, I don't know, less than five times a month, much less, and I don't even go out with my friends. (Female, 14 years old).

I was doing very well in the classroom, I had the highest grades in the whole class, but now I have dropped because of lack of attention, lack of desire to do things, and I also don't learn much because I am doing workshops outside of school. No, not workshops but like courses, because to enter high school I have to study and then, when I go to class and I already know everything, I get demotivated, and I do everything just like that. So, it's also like they judge a lot by what we do in class, and I didn't have a single test, I didn't have any practical work, I didn't have anything so that they could really evaluate me. (Female, 12 years old).

Youth reflections on well-being

In relation to how participants understand the notion of well-being, it was observed that their notions and reflections are elaborated more from a collective perspective than from an individual view, concerning physical, cognitive and emotional well-being. That is to say, both their practices and their perception of their own well-being are placed in relation to a very present “other” who is recognized both as an agent affecting their well-being – in a complex sense – and also as a subject affected by their own practices. As such, well-being is understood as a state and a relational act that focuses primarily on the dimensions of personal care – or lack thereof – and the care of others.

As the word says it, well-being (shows with hands) being-well and being well entails many things... being well physically, psychologically, emotionally, and more with oneself because if one is not well with oneself the other people are not going to be well for you or won't be there for you to be well. So, well-being encompasses many things. (Female, 15 years old).

For me, well-being is to be well psychologically and physically, physically could mean that you don't get infected and avoid the virus at all costs, and well-being is to think about how the other person is and also try to treat them well because you have to put yourself in another person's shoes. (Female, 14 years old).

In order to safeguard their well-being, participants noted that they often regulate – by, for instance, avoiding reading or watching the news while eating breakfast or lunch – their own exposure to certain types of content online or when they engage with it.

Every day I would watch the news to see what happens and things like that, but now I don't want to listen anymore, I don't know if it happens to anyone else. (Male, 12 years old).

In my family it's normal to turn on the TV at lunchtime usually. News sometimes, sometimes there are days where we watch all the news, from beginning to end and other times it's where we turn on and my mom says, „you know what, put something else on. I don't want to listen to the news. (Female, 14

years old).

4. Discussion and final thoughts

In line with the above idea, where representation directly influences how culture shapes the identities of individuals across social groups (Hall, 2007), the participants of this study noted their displeasure with the assumptions and biases towards them, generated within the media, which accused them of not performing quarantine and sanitary measures, and thus being responsible for spreading contagions and increasing COVID cases.

Young people distance themselves from their media representations, since they do not recognize within themselves the aforementioned denigratory attributes. This blaming of youth as endangering the common good (Araya, Carrasco & Olivares, 2020) is rooted in the attribution of insufficient biological and social maturity due to a psychosocial moratorium (Erikson, 2004 [1977]). These stigmatizing representations of youth make their agency and resilience invisible. Some examples are the caring activities or actions they perform with their parents, family and friends; their critical information practices and their continuous efforts to adapt their daily lives to the sanitary crisis, especially concerning the educational, leisure and affective sphere. Therefore, the idea that the media expose and crystallize a homogeneous figure of youth – contrary to Duarte's (2009) approach to the notion of youth), perpetuates a typical bias of an adult-centric society (Duarte, 2018; Reguillo, 2010) and clashes with the daily experiences of youth themselves.

During the pandemic, participants demonstrated a deep concern and being responsible for their well-being and others. Following the discussed idea of the need to include youth's perspectives in the efforts to approach well-being (Brossi et al. (eds), 2021), according to participant's own narratives, their well-being can be influenced by internal factors – mood, self-perception of stress levels, self-perception of physical health –; external factors – governmental decisions, media and other elements that affect their daily life, but are outside their sphere of intervention –; and by elements of their daily life – relationship with family and friends, ability to fulfill school duties, relationship with their immediate environment in the context of pandemic –.

We observed that youth representation of the media dehumanizes them and tends to deny their diversity and complexity as a social group by perpetuating an adult-centric discourse, cut off from the diverse contexts where young people participate and take agency. This unified, rigid and homogeneous image of youth that we discussed in the conceptual framework, ends up having a negative impact on the well-being of young people, also affected by the pandemic in several other dimensions. It is therefore important to establish ethical criteria for the media representation of youth to minimize the tension between making a social problem visible

on the one hand and the risk of stigmatizing and discriminating arbitrarily on the other (Labrín et al., 2021).

The emphatic mention of „the others“ by the young participants in this study, to refer to those groups of young people who do not respect health standards shows their efforts to dissociate themselves from a negative and consolidated figure of youth in the media, by building sense and meanings on their personal experience. Therefore, the construction and understanding of the self is not alien to these public discourses, but rather is intertwined with multidimensional factors. The participants notice a social representation of themselves as „the young“ or „youth“ that emerges from an adult-centric point of view. They manifest a feeling of injustice because they recognize the consequences of this adult-centric imaginary of youth in their daily lives: the judgment of their actions comes before their own actions, they have no margin for error, and their learning experiences as well as their own narratives throughout the pandemic are not recognized.

The attitudes of young people towards the media, opinion leaders and institutions are affected by beliefs, affections, and behaviors (Matsumoto, 2009). In relation to what was observed in this study, the attitudes of young people have been influenced by the way they are represented in traditional media, digital platforms such as social networks and messaging systems, as well as through opinion leaders and institutions, especially government and educational institutions. The passage of time, from before the beginning of the pandemic to the mass vaccination stage, is also observed as a factor of change in the attitudes and representations of young people. This is related to the fact that the discourses of the media and opinion leaders, as well as educational strategies, have been changing since the beginning of the pandemic, generating behaviors and attitudes that changed over time. However, in general terms, we can say there is a negative attitude towards the work of the media, the discourse of opinion leaders, and government and educational strategies in relation to the pandemic on its intersection with youth. The COVID-19 pandemic, as presented in the results, have impacted, and shaped in multiple ways the well-being, attitudes and social representations of young people, intensified to a great extent by the media, opinion leaders and institutions. In times of confinement, participants shared common spaces at home with their families, where television and, to a lesser extent, radio played a predominant role. In this way, the news consumed by adults from traditional media was also consumed or listened to by young people. Consequently, despite the apparent youth's preference for digital media, especially social networks, it was clear how news from traditional media was present in their daily lives. Similarly, to previous studies (Valdivia et al. 2019) participants demonstrated they do not have a lack of perspective or a naïve relationship with information, showing abilities to information search, source selection and criteria and subjective motivations.

Finally, this study is not intended to represent Chilean youth, but to inform how young people from specific situational contexts, reported being affected by public discourses in their daily lives during the pandemic, often perceiving to be stigmatized, instrumentalized and invisibilized in terms of their agency and abilities to cope with the COVID-19 crisis.

The issue of how public media discourses and the new forms of communication in pandemics have influenced the principle of otherness and the process of identity construction of young people could be usefully explored in further research, as well as how the pandemic experiences of youth have enabled new ways of narrating, feeling, acting and imagining themselves in times of crisis.

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